

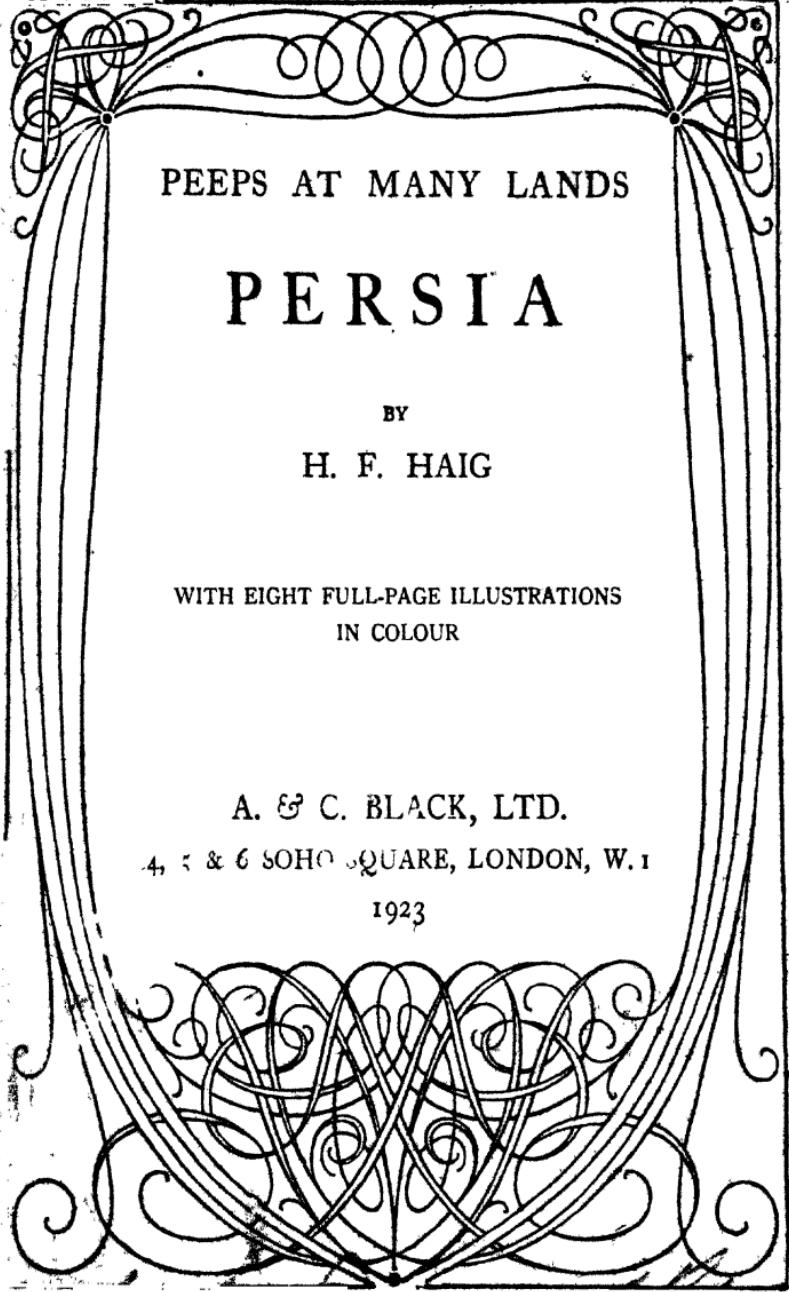
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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

PERSIA

BY

H. F. HAIG

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
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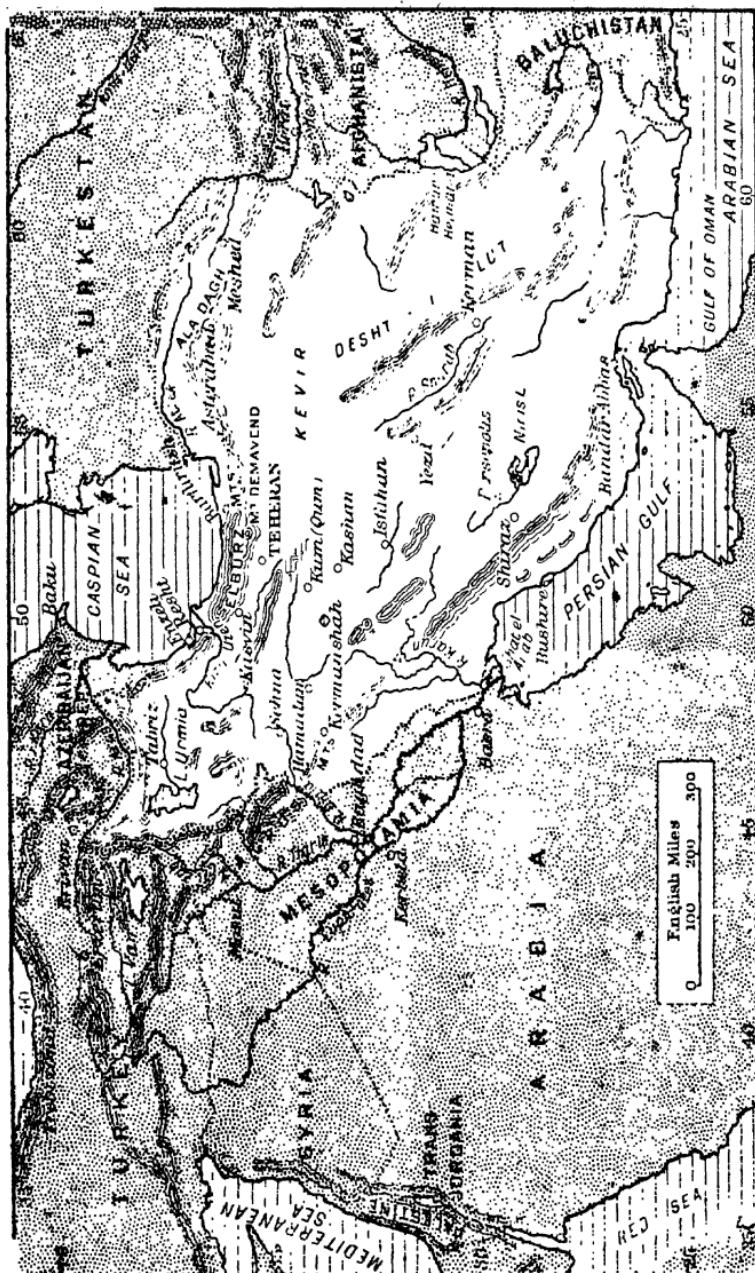
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SKETCH-MAP OF PERSIA.



P E R S I A

CHAPTER I

HER HISTORY

PERSIA is larger than France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, and Italy together, but so much of it is desert that its population is not much more than twice that of London.

The English name of the country is taken from one of its provinces, which the Greeks called Persis, and the modern Persians call Pars or Fars, but the Persians themselves call the land Iran—the country of the Aryan, or noble race—and try to persuade themselves that it has existed as an independent kingdom for six thousand years, but it has been so many times conquered and ruled by foreigners and cut up into small States, each independent of the other, that these pretensions must be attributed to national vanity. For the early history of their country the Persians refer to the *Shakname*, an epic poem of 120,000 lines, by the great poet Firdausi, who lived about nine hundred years ago; but this poem is so full of wonderful stories of heroes, demons, and fairies, that

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it may be compared to our legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and it is very difficult to determine how much historical truth lies hidden in the mass of fable. Some of the great Kings and heroes mentioned by Firdausi may actually have lived, and some of the creatures described by him as demons may have been their human enemies; but the wonderful stories told of them cannot all be true, and the *Shahnama* is of very little use to the historian who wishes to discover what really happened in Persia in distant ages.

About seven hundred years before Christ the north-western part of the country, known as Media, belonged to the great Assyrian Empire, but the Medes allied themselves to the Empire of Babylon, with the help of which they overcame their masters and divided their empire with their allies. They also extended their rule over the rest of Persia, including the vassal kingdom of Persis, or Persia proper; but only seventy years after the destruction of Nineveh by the Medes and Babylonians, Cyrus, the King of Persia, rebelled against Astyages, King of the Medes, took his capital, Ecbatana—the modern Hamadan—and became King of the Medes as well as of the Persians, the two peoples mentioned in the Bible as forming one nation.

In 538 B.C. the King of the Medes and the Persians captured Babylon and slew Belshazzar, as we read in the fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel, and

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the Empire of the Medes and Persians was extended in other directions over Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, and eastward as far as the banks of the Oxus and the Indus. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, added Tyre, Cyprus, and Egypt to his dominions, and Darius I. conquered Thrace and Macedonia, but in attempting to annex Greece was defeated, first by the Thracians, and more decisively by the Athenians at the glorious Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. Xerxes I., the son of Darius, who is called Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, again attacked Greece, but suffered disastrous defeats by sea at Salamis and by land at Platæa, and was compelled to retire into Asia Minor, where the repeated attacks of the victorious Greeks wore out his power. Egypt rebelled against his son, Artaxerxes I., and successive revolts during the next century weakened the great empire which Cyrus had founded, until in 329 B.C., in the reign of Darius III., Alexander the Great conquered Persia and included it in his vast empire; but Alexander died at Babylon in 323 B.C., and his dominions were divided among his Generals. Persia and Syria fell to the lot of Seleucus Nicator, whose descendants ruled the country until 246 B.C., when the Parthians—a foreign tribe who had established a kingdom in the north-eastern districts of Persia—conquered the whole country, and their King, Aršaces I., ruled it from his capital, Ctesiphon, near the modern Baghdad.

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The dominions of the Parthian Kings adjoined the Roman Empire, and disputes led to war. In 53 B.C. the Triumvir Cassius invaded Mesopotamia, but his army was defeated and almost entirely destroyed by Surenas, the General of the Parthian King Orodes. Within the next few years the Parthians conquered Syria and Palestine, but were afterwards expelled from these countries, and the River Euphrates became the boundary between the Parthian and Roman Empires until, in A.D. 115, the Emperor Trajan annexed Armenia and Mesopotamia to the latter. He was, however, unable to wrest any more territory from the Parthians, who twice defeated him. The Emperor Severus captured Ctesiphon, the capital of the Parthians, in A.D. 199, but was repulsed by them two years later, and in A.D. 218 the Parthian Artabanus signally defeated at Nisibis the Roman Emperor Macrinus, who was obliged to purchase a safe retreat into Syria by the payment of a large sum of money.

The Parthians raised Persia to a glorious position among the nations, but the native Persians never forgot that they were foreigners, and in A.D. 218 Ardashir (Artaxerxes) Babagan, a Prince of the southern provinces, or Persia proper, rose in revolt against them, defeated them on the plain of Hormoz, and was recognized as the King of all Persia. The dynasty which he founded is known, from the name of his grandfather, as the Sassanian, and its glory far

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exceeded that of the Parthians. In A.D. 260 Shahpur, or Sapor I., defeated and captured the Roman Emperor Valerian, who had invaded the western provinces of the new Persian Empire, and kept him in captivity until his death. Shahpur II. maintained an equal conflict with the Romans; Chosroes I. (Khusrav Anushirvan) waged war with the Roman Emperor for twenty years; and his grandson, Chosroes II. (Kai Khusrav), who ascended the throne in A.D. 590, conquered from the Byzantine Empire Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Chalcedon, but in A.D. 628 was crushed by Heraclius, the great Emperor of Constantinople.

Muhammad had by now established his new religion in Arabia, and Yazdagird III., the last King of the Sassanian dynasty, was invited to accept it instead of the old religion of Zoroaster, which had been established for centuries in Persia and Media, and had held its own through all changes. On his refusal an army of Arabs invaded Persia in A.D. 641, and he was defeated on the field of Nahavand, fifty miles from the ancient Ecbatana, and was murdered during his flight.

The war had been undertaken for the propagation of the new religion, and those who refused to accept it were so ruthlessly persecuted that the ancient faith was almost extinguished. At the present day the only important Zoroastrian communities remaining in Persia are those of Yezd and Kirman, and a great

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number of Zoroastrians, or Parsis as they are now usually called, who preferred exile to a change of faith, fled from their native land and took refuge in India, where they found a new home and became the ancestors of one of the most enlightened and progressive communities in our Indian Empire. The faithful Zoroastrians in Yežd and Kirman are still sometimes persecuted by fanatical followers of Muhammad; they must wear sad-coloured clothes, and it is only recently that they have ventured occasionally to ride horses in the streets.

The great Muhammadan Empire was ruled by a Caliph, who pretended to be the representative of God's prophet, and the spiritual as well as the temporal ruler of His people. The capital of the Caliphs was at first Damascus, but the second dynasty of Caliphs transferred it, in A.D. 750, to Baghdad, where the heat is so great that the ruler used to retire during the summer months to the cool highlands of Persia, which thus became one of the most important countries in his great empire. The Persians are an extremely clever people, and many of them rose to the highest positions in the State. The Minister Barmak, of whose descendants, the Barmecides, we read in the *Arabian Nights*, was a Persian.

As the power of the Caliphs declined, the Governors of provinces, in Persia as elsewhere, became virtually independent, and founded small kingdoms. These

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kingdoms in Persia were swept away by the Seljuk Turks, who came from Central Asia and extended their sway over the whole of Persia and most of the eastern dominions of the caliphate, and they in their turn were overwhelmed by the savage hordes of the Mongol Chingiz Khan, who devastated the eastern dominions of the caliphate, as well as eastern Europe. His grandson, Hulagu, overran Persia, where he suppressed the abominable sect of the Assassins, who had established themselves in the northern mountains, and Mesopotamia, where he slew the last of the Caliphs of Baghdad. The Mongol dynasty which Hulagu established in Persia was extinguished in 1335, when the country was again divided among petty local dynasties. These in their turn were swept away by the great conqueror Timur, commonly known in Europe as Tamerlane, which is a corruption of Timur Lang, or Timur the Lame, who established his authority over the whole of Persia, as well as the neighbouring countries. After the death of his son and successor, Shahrukh, western Persia fell into the hands of the Turkomans, who plundered the people without protecting them, and eastern Persia was divided among Timur's descendants until it was annexed in the latter part of the fifteenth century by the Uzbegs of Khiva.

In 1500 a family which, though of Arab descent, had long been settled in Persia, and had become Per-

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sian, arose and established its authority in Persia. Its founder was Ismail Safavi, a Sayyid, or descendant of the prophet Muhammad, whose ancestral home was in north-western Persia. In 1511 Ismail expelled the Uzbegs from eastern Persia, and ten years later attempted to secure his western frontier by attacking Selim, the Sultan of Turkey. He was defeated, but Selim gained nothing by his victory, and Ismail was enabled to extend his sway over the whole of Persia.

The era (1500-1722) of the Safavi dynasty, from the name of which the reigning King was known in Europe as the Sophy of Persia, was the most glorious period of Persian history since the introduction of the Muhammadan religion. Isfahan was selected as the capital, and the taste and munificence of successive Sovereigns raised it to the first rank among the great cities of the world. Chardin, the French traveller and merchant, writing in the latter half of the seventeenth century, says: "The city of Isfahan, with its suburbs, is one of the greatest cities in the world, and is not less than twelve leagues, or twenty-four miles, in circumference. . . . Many place its population at 1,100,000 souls, and those who place it the lowest assert that it amounts to 600,000." He continues: "In any case, I believe Isfahan to be as populous as London, which is the most populous city in Europe."

Persia reached the height of her glory under Shah Abbas the Great, an enlightened monarch who reigned

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from 1585 to 1628. Shah Safi and Shah Abbas II. were also enlightened rulers, and Shah Sulaiman maintained sufficiently well the reputation of the dynasty, but Sultan Husain was bigoted and feeble-minded, and permitted the priests, who held high offices in the State, to persecute all who did not belong to the established religion. The Afghans, who belonged to a different sect of the Muhammadan faith, resented this treatment, and in 1709 Mir Vais declared himself independent in Kandahar. Mahmud, one of his successors, invaded Persia in 1722, defeated the royal armies in the field, and besieged Sultan Husain in Isfahan. Supplies failed in the city, and the King was obliged to surrender and to abdicate in favour of his conqueror, who thus became Shah of Persia. Mahmud went mad and was deposed in 1725 by his brother Ashraf, a ferocious tyrant, during whose reign Nadir Kuli Afshar, a brigand of a Turkish tribe settled in north-eastern Persia, gradually acquired power and influence. In 1729 he deposed Ashraf, expelled him from Persia, and placed on the throne Shah Tahmasp, a member of the Safavi family. Tahmasp was never a King in more than name, and Nadir Kuli deposed him and raised to the throne his young son, on whose early death in 1736 he ascended the throne as Nadir Shah.

Nadir was one of the great Eastern conquerors. He recovered the provinces of Baluchistan and Afghani-

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stan, which the later Safavi Kings had lost, invaded India, captured Delhi, and carried back to Persia an enormous quantity of plunder, including the famous peacock throne of the Mughul Emperors.

Nadir's last days were clouded with the shadow of madness, and in 1747 he was put to death. He left no worthy successor, the kingdom dissolved in anarchy, Afghanistan and Baluchistan were again lost, and the country was divided into separate States until, in 1755, Karim Khan Zand, a Kurd, established his authority in western Persia and ruled his dominions wisely and well. He was succeeded by Ali Murad, Jafar, and Lutf Ali, and during the reign of the last the Kajar tribe of Turks under Agha Muhammad established their independence in Mazandaran, the province lying to the south and east of the Caspian Sea.

The Kajars, a powerful and numerous tribe, rapidly extended their influence over northern Persia, inflicting several defeats on the royal troops, and Agha Muhammad was soon able to invade the southern provinces and to drive Lutf Ali from his capital to Kirman, where he besieged him. The town was taken and the inhabitants were treated with the most barbarous cruelty. Lutf Ali had fled, but Agha Muhammad pursued and captured him, and ascended the throne of Persia.

The Kajar dynasty still reigns in Persia. Agha

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Muhammad had no son, and was succeeded in 1797 by his nephew, Fath Ali Shah, who having, not without difficulty, established his authority, engaged, during his reign of thirty-seven years, in three disastrous wars with Russia, in each of which he lost territory and was compelled to pay a heavy indemnity. On his death in 1834 he was succeeded by his grandson, Muhammad Shah, who died in 1848 and was succeeded by his son, Nasir-ud-din Shah.

In 1856 Nasir-ud-din besieged Herat, then held by the Afghans, and despite the remonstrances of the East India Company and the British Government, who regarded Herat as the key of India and were most unwilling that it should fall into the possession of a power which was known to be under the influence of Russia, captured the city. A small army of British and Indian troops, under the command of Generals Outram and Havelock, was immediately landed in the Persian Gulf, defeated the Persians wherever they met them, and compelled the Shah to sue for peace, which was granted on his surrendering Herat to the Amir of Afghanistan and promising to make no attempt in the future to recover it.

Nasir-ud-din, who was the first Persian monarch to travel abroad, made three separate journeys to Europe, and in 1873 visited England. His travels opened his mind and inspired his wealthier subjects with the desire of having their sons educated in Europe, but

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they were of little direct advantage to his country, and their expense imposed heavy burdens on the limited resources of Persia.

Nasir-ud-din was assassinated in 1897 by a miserable fanatic, and was succeeded by his second son, Muzaffar-ud-din. It is a rule of the Kajar House that the Sovereign must be of royal blood on both sides—that is to say, that his mother must be a royal Princess. The mother of Prince Zill-us-Sultan, Nasir-ud-din's eldest son, was not of royal blood, and thus it was that Muzaffar-ud-din, though inferior both in ability and in strength of character to his elder brother, obtained the throne.

In 1906 Muzaffar-ud-din was compelled to grant to his people a Constitution for which they were hardly fitted, and, dying in the following year, was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Ali Shah, who, though he had taken on his accession an oath of fidelity to the Constitution, endeavoured, with the help of his Russian officers and advisers, to withdraw it; but he was cowardly and irresolute, and when success was almost within his grasp lost heart, and fled for refuge to the Russian Legation. He was deposed and banished, and his son Sultan Ahmad Shah, a boy of thirteen, was raised to the throne in 1909, and still reigns.

CHAPTER II

THE COUNTRY AND THE CLIMATE—

PERSIA is a country which is very difficult to get to know well, as the towns lie far apart, separated by great tracts of desert. As there are no railways in the country except for one short line running from the Russian frontier to Tabriz, travelling is slow and tiring. There is, however, not very much variety in the country, and all the towns bear a strong family likeness to one another.

In the south, where Persia is bounded by the Persian Gulf, there is a low-lying strip of land some fifty miles wide. The heat here is intense and the climate very unhealthy. The hot wind which blows in these parts was supposed to be so poisonous that it not only killed those it blew upon, but caused their bodies to decompose at once. There are two ports of some importance here—Bushire and Bandar Abbas. The latter was once known as Gombroon, and our old East India Company had an agent here, as well as the Dutch East India Company.

Many roads lead up from this plain on to the Persian tableland. Some of them are now fit for car-

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riages and motor-cars, but till a few years ago they were mere tracks, up which the laden pack-animals scrambled with difficulty. As the roads ascend the air gets gradually fresher and cooler, and once on to the plateau the vegetation changes; below there were palms—up here plane-trees, poplars, and elms. This is the real Persia, the other was but the doorstep. This plateau varies in height from 2,000 to 4,000 feet, and is crossed by numerous ranges of rocky mountains.

Shiraz and Kirman are the two principal towns of the southern part of the tableland. The latter is famous for its wonderful carpets, the former for its wine. Two of the great Persian poets, Sadi and Hafiz, were natives of Shiraz, and are buried near by, and their tombs are still to be seen, unimposing and unworthy of the remains they cover. So fond are the Persians of their works that many illiterate people can recite whole pages of them by heart.

Near Shiraz lie the most interesting ruins in the whole country—those of Persepolis, the capital of the Achæmenian dynasty. The valley they lie in is now deserted, and the enormous terraces crowned with groups of tall pillars and great stone blocks are only visited by an occasional sightseer. The terraces are built against the sides of the hills and are mounted by wide flights of stairs. The stone containing walls are carved with long processions of men and beasts,

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supposed to be the subjects of the great Kings bringing tribute, and the archers and spearmen of the army. Many of the pillars have fallen and the bull's-head capitals are lying on the ground. The huge door-frames and other blocks of stone which remain are carved with winged, human-headed bulls, and near by is a bas-relief of a King on his throne. He wears a crown and his beard, tightly curled, descends half-way to his waist, while an attendant holds a huge umbrella over his head.

Unfortunately the Muhammadan religion forbids the representation in art of living things, so many of these interesting relics have been defaced. The buildings were destroyed during the invasion of Alexander the Great, when during a drunken feast the palace was set on fire and the roof, supported by great cedar beams, fell in.

There are other remains in other parts of the country which bear witness to its former greatness—immense bas-reliefs of triumphant monarchs carved in the solid rock, and great rock tombs, now empty, cut high up on cliff-faces.

The figures may seem stiff to us now, but they are beautifully proportioned and convey a wonderful impression of power and majesty. The cuneiform inscriptions which accompany some of them have only lately been deciphered, and for centuries the subjects remained a mystery to travellers, who

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hazarded the wildest guesses as to who and what the people depicted were. Beside these magnificent remains the buildings of modern Persia look very mean and shoddy with their crumbling brickwork and peeling plaster.

To the north of Kirman and Shiraz lies the Kavir, an immense and desolate salt desert. It stretches away, featureless, into a dim haze, hundreds of miles beyond which lies the rich province of Khurasan, whose capital is Meshed. The ground in places is covered with a thick layer of salt which glitters like snow in the bright sunshine and reflects a blinding glare. It is crossed by two or three caravan routes, but they are rarely used, for the wells are few and far between and the water in them is brackish, and no food or supplies of any sort are to be found on the way.

During the reign of Fath Ali Shah—one of the early rulers of the Kajar dynasty—the city of Isfahan was attacked and looted by a raiding party of Turkomans, a race which still inhabits Khurasan. They crossed the desert on their horses with wonderful rapidity, and, though few in numbers, fell upon the city by night, looted the bazaars, and departed in safety with their spoils. The Turkoman horses are famous for their speed, but above all for their endurance and hardiness—many of them, in spite of the great winter cold, never having been inside a stable.

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To the east of this waste, on the borders of Afghanistan, lies the isolated province of Sistan.

The western part of Persia is more fertile than the eastern. The mountains are larger and more numerous: to the south-west they buttress the country up above the flat, hot plains of Mesopotamia; to the north-west they unite with the mountain ranges of Turkey and Armenia.

Through the south-western mountains lies the road to Baghdad—the road used by Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, by the Roman and Arab invaders, and by the Caliphs when they sought refuge in the Persian hills from the heat of their capital, Baghdad. It is still the means of communication between the two countries, and carries a great deal of trade, and also a heavy pilgrim traffic, for every year thousands of devout Persians go down to Kerbela, the place of martyrdom of their saint Husain.

The towns of Kermanshah and Hamadan lie on this road. The latter occupies the site of the ancient Ecbatana, but as it is built immediately over the older city there are no remains to be seen. A mean little mud building is pointed out as covering the tombs of Esther and Mordecai, but it is of no great age.

Farther north, in the province of Azerbaijan, is Tabriz, after Tehran the largest and richest town in the country. Politically also it is of great impor-

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tance, for it lies almost on the borders of Russia. The trade routes from Russia, Asia Minor, and Trebizond—an important port on the Black Sea—meet here. Through Trebizond used to pour the greater part of the trade from Constantinople and Europe, and found its way via Tabriz to Persia and the countries beyond.

There is one other part of Persia which bears some resemblance to the shores of the Persian Gulf, and that is a narrow strip of land in the north which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Elburz Mountains, the northern buttress of the great tableland. The Caspian is an inland sea lying 80 feet below ordinary sea-level. The evaporation from it is very rapid, and the moisture is condensed into clouds which seldom rise above the mountains. The rain therefore falls on their lower slopes and on the plain at their feet. There is no lack of water here as there is inland, and the vegetation is very luxuriant. Rice, a crop which needs a great deal of water, is grown in large quantities and is exported to other parts of Persia. The forests are very dense and there are many kinds of trees—beech, oak, chestnut, and others which are seldom found on the dry tableland. These forests might be of great commercial value if the timber could be carried inland at a reasonable cost, for there is a constant shortage there.

Enzeli, the chief Persian port on the Caspian, lies

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at the mouth of a great lagoon. The great reed-beds, square-sailed boats, flights of water-fowl, and little steep-roofed houses remind one of a Japanese print. The great mountain range in the background is hidden as often as not by the low-lying clouds. The dampness of the air makes the climate very trying, especially in the summer, when the heat is almost suffocating. The place swarms with mosquitoes, and there is a great deal of malaria about. The natives are a weedy-looking, fever-ridden lot, and are very much looked down upon by the other Persians.

From Enzeli a road runs to Resht, an even less attractive town. Lying farther inland, it is cut off from the sea-breezes by forests with a rank under-growth, and the air feels even hotter and more steamy. The houses are built largely of wood and roofed either with tiles or a coarse thatch. Damp seems to ooze from their walls, and there is a general air of decay. It is a relief to follow the road out of the town and up a winding valley towards Kasim. The scenery and vegetation gradually change, the thick forests giving way first to scrub and then to bare hillsides with an occasional olive grove and patches of barley as the road mounts zig-zagging along the hillsides till it reaches the top of a pass and then drops slowly towards Kasvin.

The climate of the plateau is very unlike that of

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the low coastal regions. It is temperate rather than tropical, and is subject to great extremes, but the air is dry and healthy, and the heat is easier to bear than the damp heat of the coasts.

The climate is very regular, the heat and cold coming at the appointed times and the rain falling when it is expected. The Persians divide their year up into various periods, for which they have many curious names. After March 21st six showers of rain "bottles," as they call them, are expected to fall at intervals of ten days. There is seldom any more rain until the autumn; the earth parches to a whitish-brown and the roads lie inches deep in dust, which rises in suffocating clouds whenever anyone passes. There are two periods of great heat during the summer called the Great Forty and the Lesser Forty; they consist of forty days and twenty days respectively. Rain falls again during the autumn, and during the winter there is often snow as well as rain. Sometimes the passes over the mountains are blocked by snow for days, and towns are cut off from one another. About December 20th begins another Great Forty—forty days of great cold; it is followed by a Lesser Forty, or twenty days of lesser cold. The last four days of this Great Forty and the first four of the Lesser Forty quarrel among themselves, which makes the weather very unsettled. The Lesser Forty is followed by a period known as

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Ahman Bahman, which lasts till March 11th, when comes the Old Woman's Winter. The story goes that an old woman who owned camels, which she hired out during the warmer months, found that spring would be upon her before they were sufficiently rested to take the road. Therefore, she prayed to God that the winter might be lengthened. Her prayer was answered and a spell of cold weather may always be expected just before the *Nau Ruz*, or New Year's Day, which according to the old solar calendar falls upon March 21st.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGION OF THE PERSIANS

THE ancient religion of the Persians was that preached by the prophet Zoroaster, who taught that there was but one God, and that He alone was to be worshipped and served; but as time went on this religion was corrupted, and the Persians recognized two great beings—Ahuramazda, or Hormuzd (the lord of all that was good), and Ahriman (the lord of all that was bad)—and thus became dualists, or the worshippers of two principles. This was the religion professed at the time when the Arabs invaded their country for the purpose of compelling them to become Muhammadans, and is the religion professed to-day by the Parsis of India and by the few Persians in Persia who have remained faithful to the old religion. They are called Gabrs by the Muhammadans and Zoroastrians by themselves. They show great respect to the sun and to fire, as emblems of the brightness and purity of the Deity, and hence are often called fire-worshippers or sun-worshippers; but they resent being so described, and the terms do not fairly describe them, for they do not actually worship either

The Religion of the Persians

the fire or the sun. They are peculiar in their method of disposing of their dead, and they neither bury the bodies (which, they say, would defile the earth), nor burn them (which would defile fire, the sacred element), but expose them on gratings in buildings known to us as Towers of Silence, but called by them *dakhma*, where they are devoured by birds of prey, the bones eventually falling through the grating into a pit.

Their women also wear a distinctive dress—full-striped trousers, a long shirt, also striped, and on great occasions or in the winter a brocade coat. Their faces are never veiled like those of the Muhammadan women, but their heads are wrapped up in a number of silk shawls and handkerchiefs which completely hide the hair and ears, and fall over the shoulders and down the back. The richer the woman, the greater the number of the handkerchiefs.

After the Arab invasion nearly all the Persians who did not escape to India became Muhammadans, and the Safavi Kings, who belonged to the Shiah sect of that religion, established that sect in Persia, and all Persians, with very few exceptions, now belong to it. They thus differ from their neighbours the Turks and Afghans, who belong to the Sunni sect, and there was much enmity between them and the Persians on this account, for the two sects hate and abuse one another bitterly. Their enmity to one another is

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less openly bitter than it was, but there is still much latent animosity between them.

The principal religious celebration of the Persians takes place during the first ten days of Muharram, which is the first month of the Muhammadan year. It cannot be called a festival, for it is a period of mourning for two martyrs—the brothers Hasan and Husain, but particularly the latter. Hasan and Husain were the sons of Ali, Muhammad's cousin, by his wife Fatima, who was the daughter of Muhammad. Both were therefore grandsons of the prophet, and, according to the Shiahhs, should have succeeded to temporal and spiritual sovereignty over all Muhammadans, but both were slain by the officers of the ruler who actually held the sovereignty. Hasan was poisoned and Husain was slain in battle in painful circumstances. The Sunnis disavow and condemn the killing of the two martyrs, as the Shiahhs deem them, but the Shiahhs in mourning their death heap abuse on the heads of those who slew them.

The period of mourning is known as the *Ashura*. It begins on the first day of Muharram and continues till the tenth, when it culminates in a perfect orgie of emotional grief. Professional mourners read or recite long tales of the martyrdom of Husain, dwelling on every detail of his sufferings. Processions pass through the streets representing the martyr and his family and the wild beasts who are said to have



TEA-HOUSE ON THE RESHT ROAD.

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mounted guard over the dead bodies. They are accompanied by gangs of mourners, some of whom beat their breasts, with loud cries, while others flog themselves with bunches of chains, or cut their shaven heads with short swords until the blood runs down over the white winding-sheets they wear. This last performance is not always genuine, and the performers sometimes pay a barber to make a small and painless cut on the scalp with a razor, and drench their white winding-sheets with the blood of a fowl, but some, more zealous, really wound themselves and are sometimes carried away in a fainting condition. Deaths have occurred among them, but these are rare.

During the *Ashura* a series of plays is performed representing the various episodes of the great tragedy. These are played before large mixed audiences—the women sitting on one side, the men on the other; they become quite hysterical in their grief, sobbing and gesticulating, and even men shed floods of tears. The staging and acting are generally very crude. The plays usually take place in the open air or in the courtyard of a caravanserai, but in Tehran a theatre was built for this purpose by Nasir-ud-din Shah. The actors are all men and boys.

The fanaticism of the devotees becomes ever more intense, until on the tenth day it reaches a frenzy. After the tenth day it dies away, but the whole of the

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month and the month of Safar, which immediately follows it, are regarded as months of mourning.

Another ceremony is the fast, which endures through Ramazan, the ninth month of the Muhammadan year. The Muhammadan rules of fasting are very severe, and during this month no good Musalman is supposed to eat a mouthful of any sort of food, to drink a drop of any liquid, or to smoke from about half an hour before sunrise until about half an hour after sunset. The Muhammadan year consists of twelve months, each beginning with a new moon, and thus contains only 354 days, or eleven less than our solar year. The lunar year thus works slowly backwards through the seasons, and the month of Ramazan may occur in any season of the year. When it occurs in the winter, when the days are short and thirst is but little felt, the privations of him who keeps the fast are comparatively light; but in the long days of summer, when the heat is great, the sufferings of the devout are considerable. They comfort themselves by sitting down, as soon as food is permitted, to an enormous meal. They usually pass the night in festivity and eat another enormous meal just before dawn. After such a night they are all only fit to spend most of the day in sleep, and very little work is done. Children under a certain age, travellers, and sick people are excused from keeping the fast. Many people, therefore, discover

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or invent some small ailment, or perhaps they move out to a house in the country a few miles from the town and pretend that they are on a journey, while others frankly ignore the fast. They thus avoid all the inconvenience, but the omission does not prevent them from joining their friends for the two night meals, or from rejoicing with them at the celebration of the festival which concludes the month of fasting.

Nearly six hundred miles to the west of Tehran lies the city of Meshed. In spite of its remoteness, in spite of the discomfort and the difficulties of the journey, it is visited, perhaps, by larger numbers of people than any other Persian town, for there is the shrine of the Imam Reza, a very holy man and one of the descendants of Muhammad. For miles out along the roads which lead to the city, and particularly on the hilltops, the traveller sees small cairns. These have been erected by the pilgrims, each one adding a stone when he first catches sight of the golden dome under which lie the bones of the saint. Were it not for this building, a distant view of Meshed would be very like that of any other Persian town—just a mass of flat-topped mud-houses with clumps of trees showing up here and there, but the glittering dome with its two accompanying minarets and a neighbouring one covered with shining tiles of turquoise blue lend it a special interest.

Throughout the year the pilgrims stream towards

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Meshed from all quarters of the kingdom, and not from Persia only do they come, but Shiah Muhammadans from all parts of the East swell the numbers. The rich travel in carriages attended by their servants, others less fortunate jolt along in small, springless, one-horsed carts. Several of these travel together for company and cover but eighteen or twenty miles a day. The greater number of pilgrims travel by mule or donkey caravan. Their rate of progress is no more rapid than that of the owners of the carts; the animals never go out of a walk, and a journey of a few hundred miles takes weeks. Each man piles his little carpet, and bundles of bedding and clothes, on to his wretched beast, hangs a water-jar and perhaps a *qalian* on to the erection, and finally climbs on top. The leading mule is adorned with a big copper bell, which hangs from his neck, and one or two flags; the tops of the poles are surmounted by an outstretched hand made of metal—a holy symbol which also surmounts the domes of the Shiah mosques. The pilgrims who are too poor to afford the hire of a donkey walk, begging their way from town to town. Many of the older ones never reach their goal, but die by the way.

Other pilgrims jog along through the heat, but they are past caring for any discomfort. These are the dead whose bodies are sent by their relations to be buried in the holy city. It is well to give these

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gruesome caravans a wide berth; this is easily done, as they can be distinguished a long way off, each mule being loaded with two coffins, one slung on either side.

The town is full of large caravanserais for the accommodation of the pilgrims; it is also full of rascally Mullahs and Sayyids, as the descendants of Muhammad are called, who make a living by fleecing the wretched strangers. The shrine was formerly very rich, being heavily endowed with lands and money, partly for its own upkeep and partly for the support of poor pilgrims; but nearly all this wealth has now vanished.

It was always impossible for a Christian to go into the shrine unless he was in disguise, but ever since the Russians bombarded it, to impress the Persians with their power, it has been difficult even to get near it. The building suffered a good deal during the bombardment, as it is made of fragile materials—brick overlaid with glazed tiles. It was a foolish act, and roused a great deal of hatred and ill-feeling.

The old Russian province of Transcaspia lies but a few days' march to the north, beyond and below a range of mountains. Large numbers of the merchants in Meshed were Russian subjects, many of them Christians, either Armenian, Russian, or German by race. Before the war the bazaars were full of their goods—glass and china, tea and sugar, cotton

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goods and hardware. Besides the merchants there were, before the revolution, a Russian consulate, a Russian bank, and a regiment of cossacks; there were also a few British, some Belgians and Americans. In spite of the large Russian element, the town has been less Russianized than might have been expected. This is probably due to its being a stronghold of the Shiah faith. The Mullahs, who are bigoted and narrow-minded, still have a certain hold over the people; they are opposed to progress, for they know that if the people were to be educated they would lose a great deal of their power over them.

Persia possesses another holy city: this is Qum, where Fatima, the sister of the Imam Reza, lies beneath another golden dome, and the Persians have a legend that every Friday evening she is visited by her brother. Lying on the highroad between Tehran and Isfahan, Qum is more easily accessible than Meshed, and it is visited every year by large numbers of pilgrims, and many corpses are carried there for burial. Both shrines are places of sanctuary, and once inside the doors any criminal is safe from justice.

The town is situated in a very barren tract of country on the western edge of an arm of the great desert, and to its famous shrine it owes its size and importance.

CHAPTER IV

ZAHHAK AND FARIDUN

A LEGEND OF DAMAVAND.

ACCORDING to the old legends, the greatest of all the Kings of Persia was Jamshid, of whom many strange tales are told in the *Shahnama*. He reigned for seven hundred years, and his power constantly increased until in the last years of his reign he imagined himself to be a god, and caused images of himself to be made and sent to all parts of his kingdom in order that his people might worship them. This impiety drew on him the wrath of God. His people turned against him, and a neighbouring King named Zahhak was enabled to overthrow him, and to usurp the throne of Persia, which he held for a thousand years. The Persians, who had at first welcomed Zahhak, soon had reason to repent their choice, for the new King was a cruel tyrant. He was said to have sold himself to the devil, and having once allowed the devil to kiss his shoulders, two serpents grew from them and caused him constant pain. The devil told him that these serpents would cease to trouble him if they

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were fed on the brains of men, and for this reason he daily killed one of his subjects in order that the serpents might be supplied with food. Historians have attempted to explain this legend by supposing that the tyrant was troubled with painful ulcers on his shoulders, to which he applied poultices of human brains, but we cannot be sure of the true explanation of the story.

At length Zahhak caused to be seized, in order that he might be slain to supply food for the serpents, the son of a blacksmith of Isfahan, named Kava. Kava begged the King to spare his only son, and when the King refused to grant his prayer, rose in rebellion, and hoisting his leather apron on a staff, carried it before the rebels as a banner.

A Prince descended from the ancient royal family of Persia was still living, but had been obliged to hide himself in the mountains of Elburz, for Zahhak had been warned in a dream that a Prince would arise and drive him from his throne, and he had caused a careful search to be made for his enemy. This Prince, whose name was Faridun, now joined Kava, the blacksmith, and the people, weary of the oppression which they had so long endured, joined the Prince's army and helped him to overthrow the tyrant. In the battle between Faridun and Zahhak, Faridun struck the tyrant on the head with his great mace, the head of which was shaped like that of an ox, and was about

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to slay him when a voice warned him that the tyrant's hour was not yet come. He therefore carried him to Damavand, the great mountain near Tehran, and bound him with thongs of leather in a fathomless cavern beneath the mountain, where it is supposed that the tyrant still lives in pain and torment.

Faridun then ascended the throne of Persia and reigned for five hundred years, and the leather apron of the blacksmith became the standard of the Persian monarchy. It was ornamented by successive Kings with jewels, and is said to have been last carried at the Battle of Nahavand, where Yazdagird, the last of the old Kings of Persia, was defeated by the Arabs.

BAHRAM GUR

Bahram, a King of Persia who reigned in the latter part of the fourth and the early part of the fifth centuries of the Christian era, was the son of Yazdagird II., who, being displeased with his son, imprisoned him. Bahram was released at the intercession of one of his friends and took refuge with the King of Yaman, or Arabia Felix. Yazdagird was such a tyrant that the Persians did not wish to have his son as their King, and when he died, instead of sending for Bahram, who was the heir to the kingdom, they placed on the throne an old man named Khusrav. Bahram, when he heard of his father's death, came from Arabia with a large army to fight

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for his father's crown, and Khusrav came forth to meet him. Bahram was not cruel like his father, and was unwilling that any of his father's subjects should risk their lives in maintaining his claim to the throne, but he was brave, so he proposed that the crown should be placed on a throne and should be guarded by two hungry lions, and that the man who could take the crown should be King. The Persians approved this proposal, but Khusrav, who feared the lions, said that as he held the crown and Bahram was only a pretender, it was fair that Bahram should make the first attempt to take the crown. Bahram agreed to this, and slew the lions and took the crown, and the Persians acknowledged him as their King. He was a very different King from his father. His proposal that he should encounter the lions rather than allow his army to fight, proved him to be careful of the lives of his people, as well as brave, and he was a very just King. As the historian says : "He applied ointment to the wounds which his father had inflicted." He was fond of pleasure and devoted to hunting, his favourite game being the wild-ass, which is very shy and very swift; but Bahram slew very many with his arrows, and it was for this reason that the Persians called him Bahram Gur, *gur* being the Persian word for the wild-ass.

One day before he ascended the throne Bahram was out hunting with a lady named Dilaram, before whom

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he was proud to show his unerring skill with the bow. They came to a herd of gazelles, one of which was scratching its ear with its hind-foot, and Bahram pinned the gazelle's foot to its ear and its ear to its head, with an arrow. Dilaram was secretly full of admiration for such marksmanship, but did not wish to let Bahram see how much she admired him, so she told him that practice made perfect. Bahram was much annoyed at Dilaram's lack of appreciation, so she left him and retired into the country, but she still loved him, and resolved one day to perform a feat which would excite his admiration. She carried a calf every day to the top of a high flight of steps, and by degrees the calf grew into a cow, by which time Dilaram, who had grown accustomed to its gradual growth, was able to carry the cow up the steps without difficulty. Bahram, when out hunting one day, passed the village to which Dilaram had retired, and was astonished to see a woman carry a heavy cow up a high and steep flight of steps. He called her to him to question her, and recognized Dilaram, who on being questioned told him that she had resolved to prove to him that practice made perfect. Bahram understood that she had undergone all this heavy labour for love of him, and they were happy together again.

CHAPTER V

RUSTAM, SON OF ZAL

RUSTAM, son of Zal, was the greatest of the Persian heroes of old time. It is possible that there may have been a great hero named Rustam, but it is very certain that no Rustam ever lived who performed all the great deeds attributed to the legendary hero. He seems to have been a national hero round whom various legends gathered in later times, as legends have gathered round King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and round Roland, the famous Knight of Charlemagne's Court.

Rustam's first exploit was the slaying, by one blow of his mace, of a fierce white elephant which had escaped from its keepers; and his next was his capture, single-handed, of a fortress on the Sipand Mountain. He approached the fortress with a caravan of mules bearing salt, having hidden his famous mace in one of the loads, and was admitted as a simple merchant. In the night he seized his mace, slew the whole garrison after a fierce combat, and acquired a large quantity of treasure which was hidden in the fort.

Rustam, Son of Zal

In the reign of Faridun's grandson, Nuzar, Afrasiyab, King of Turan—then a great country in Central Asia—invaded Persia, captured Nuzar, put him to death, and usurped the throne of Persia. Zal, the father of Rustam, expelled him and placed on the throne Zaw, the son of Nuzar. Zaw died and was succeeded by his son Gurshasp, in whose reign Afrasiyab again invaded Persia. Zal and Rustam were unable at once to drive out Afrasiyab, but Rustam brought Kai Kubad, a descendant of Faridun, from the Elburz Mountains, placed him on the throne of Persia, and in the battle against Afrasiyab seized him with one hand by the waistbelt and carried him off. Afrasiyab was saved by his belt breaking, but Rustam took his crown from his head and carried it to Kai Kubad.

Kai Kaus, the successor of Kai Kubad, disregarding the advice of Zal, invaded the Mazandaran, the tract of country lying between the Elburz Mountains and the southern shore of the Caspian. Mazandaran did not then form part of the kingdom of Persia, but was ruled by a gigantic ogre or demon known as Div-i-safid, or the White Demon. When the Persian army invaded the country the White Demon, by his magic arts, struck both the King and his troops with blindness, and Kai Kaus, bitterly regretting his folly in disregarding the wise advice of Zal, sent a message to Rustam, imploring him to come to his

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assistance. The hero set out alone with his famous horse Rakhsh, and entered Mazandaran through the Haft Khan, seven places on the road through the mountains, at each of which he met with an adventure. At the first a lion came upon him when he was asleep, and the hero was saved by the animal's first attacking his horse, which was as brave as its master. It attacked the lion with its forefeet and then with its teeth, and when Rustam awoke he found the lion at its last gasp. At the second place Rustam nearly died of thirst, but by persevering in his search for water, found a fountain at which both he and his horse refreshed themselves. The third place was inhabited by a dragon for fear of which neither man nor beast, nor even the demons of Mazandaran, could pass that way. The dragon came upon Rustam while he was asleep, and the faithful Rakhsh woke him, but by the time he was well awake the dragon had disappeared in the darkness. Rustam was annoyed at being awakened for nothing, as he thought, and went to sleep again. The same thing happened again, and Rustam was so angry with Rakhsh that he threatened to kill him if he woke him again without a cause. The dragon returned a third time, and Rakhsh again woke his master, who saw the dragon this time and prepared to slay him. The combat between the hero and the dragon was so equal that Rakhsh feared for his master, and tore the monster with his teeth.

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Rustum was then able to cut off its head with one blow of his sword, and the plain was filled with the blood which spouted from its neck.

At the fourth place Rustam found a meal spread beside a beautiful fountain—wine, and bread, and meat—and sitting by the food a beautiful damsel. He alighted and refreshed himself, and when he had finished sang to a harp which the damsel had, and then offered her, in the name of God, a cup of wine. But the damsel was really a witch; when the name of God was uttered she suddenly shrivelled up and became a hideous old hag. Rustam at once threw a noose round her neck, forced her to confess that she was a witch, and slew her with his dagger, striking terror into the hearts of the sorcerers and witches who were her companions, and who had withdrawn on his approach to observe, while hidden, how she would destroy him.

At the fifth place Rustam lay down to sleep, leaving Rakhsh grazing in a field of green barley. The watcher of the field came up and, finding Rustam asleep, struck him. Rustam suddenly awoke, and in his wrath seized the wretched man by his ears and tore them out by the roots. The watcher carried his ears to a demon named Ulad, to whom he complained of Rustam, and Ulad sought Rustam in order that he might punish him for his cruelty. The two met, and Rustam overthrew Ulad, but spared his life on con-

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dition of his telling where the White Demon lived, and where he had imprisoned Kai Kaus and his army. Ulad at first attempted to dissuade Rustam from an undertaking so perilous as an encounter with the terrible demon, but when he found the hero resolute, promised to guide him to the demon's abode.

Riding on with his defeated enemy, Rustam came to the sixth place, where Arzhang, one of the principal demons of Mazandaran, came forth to meet him. Rustam seized him by his ears and his hair, and tore his head from his body. Still guided by Ulad through perilous mountain tracks Rustam came to the seventh place, which was the stronghold of the White Demon, who came forth with an army of demons to meet him. Rustam threw the White Demon to the ground with such force as to kill him, and then with his dagger cut out his heart and liver, while the army of demons, seeing their leader overthrown, dispersed and fled. Rustam then found Kai Kaus and his army, and cured their blindness by anointing their eyes with the blood from the heart and liver of the demon. After a week's rejoicing, during which due honour was paid to Rustam, Kai Kaus attacked and defeated the King of Mazandaran, and, after placing the friendly demon Ulad on the throne of the country, returned to the highlands of Persia, and allowed Rustam to return to Sistan, of which province he was Governor.

Kai Kaus next engaged in a disastrous war with

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the King of Hamavaran, or south-western Arabia, who took him prisoner, and Rustam was again obliged to go to the assistance of his master, whom he rescued and brought back to Persia, in return for which service he received the hand of Mihr-Naz, sister of Kai Kaus.

Rustam also married the daughter of the King of Samangam, a country between Persia and Mesopotamia, and she became the mother of his son Suhrab, who when he became a young man left his home and entered the service of Afrasiyab, the King of Turan. Afrasiyab invaded Persia, and Rustam and Suhrab met in battle, and the father killed his son without recognizing him. Peace was made, but war soon broke out again, and Rustam invaded Turan or Turkistan with a Persian army, defeated Afrasiyab, and laid his country waste. Kai Kaus died after a reign of 150 years, and was succeeded by his grandson Kai Khusrav. In his reign Bizhan, a Persian nobleman, visited the Court of Afrasiyab and was detained by him as a prisoner, and Kai Khusrav ordered Rustam to go and release him. Rustam went to Turan disguised as a merchant and released Bizhan. He fought with Afrasiyab and defeated him, and Afrasiyab, to avenge this defeat, sent an army to pursue him into Persia. Kai Khusrav sent a large army under the command of an officer named Gudarz to expel the invaders, and the two armies fought for

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several days without either gaining the victory. It was then agreed that twelve champions should be chosen from each army, and that the result of a combat between them should be accepted as decisive. The champions of Persia slew all those of Turan, and the invaders retired. Kai Khusrav then led an army in person in pursuit of them, and attacked them in Khvarazin, where he slew the son of Afrasiyab and defeated his army. Kai Khusrav pursued Afrasiyab, and at last came up with him in Azebaijan, where Afrasiyab was defeated and taken prisoner. Kai Khusrav put both him and his brothers to death.

During the reigns of the next few Kings of Persia Rustam remained in Sistan and ruled that country and south-western Afghanistan, then called Zabulistan, like an independent monarch. Gushtasp, King of Persia, enraged by Rustam's assumption of independence, sent his son Isfandizar to capture him, and bring him to Court, but Rustam slew Isfandizar. Zal, Rustam's father, had in his old age another son named Shaghad, who was sent for his education to the Court of the King of Kabul, whose daughter he married when he grew up. Shaghad was jealous of the great fame of his brother Rustam, and the King of Kabul was annoyed with the hero because he forced him to pay tribute, so Shaghad and the King conspired to destroy Rustam. They agreed that Shaghad should go to Sistan and by some means persuade

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Rustam to come to Kabul, where the King laid his plans to slay him. He caused to be dug in a hunting preserve where he knew Rustam would wish to hunt, two deep pits, at the bottom of which were fixed spikes and swords with the points upwards, and he covered the pits so carefully that nobody would notice that the ground had been disturbed. Shaghad went to Sistan and complained of the way in which the King of Kabul had treated him. He said that he had not only insulted him, but had also spoken disrespectfully of his great brother, Rustam, and had declared that he would pay him no more tribute. Rustam was very angry and went to Kabul with Shaghad, taking with him his other brother, Zavara. On Rustam's arrival at Kabul, Shaghad proposed that he should go out hunting, and Rustam, suspecting nothing, went out hunting with Zavara and was led towards the two pits. As he approached one of them his faithful horse Rakhsh, smelling the freshly disturbed earth, suspected a trap, and refused to go on, but Rustam struck him with his whip and compelled him to go forward, so that both fell into the pit, while Zavara fell into the other pit. Shaghad was told that his brothers had fallen into the pits, and went out to jeer at Rustam and gloat over his death. As he came near the pit he observed that Rustam, although grievously wounded by the swords and spikes, was still alive and still had his bow and arrows, so he took

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cover behind a plane-tree, but Rustam, fitting an arrow to the string, drew his bow so strongly that the arrow went through the trunk of the tree and into Shaghad's breast, killing him. Rustam and Zavara then died.

CHAPTER VI

TEHRAN

TEHRAN is the town best known by Europeans, for it is the capital of the country, a position it attained when the present royal family came to the throne, the first Shah of the line transferring the seat of the government there from Isfahan. It lies on the southern slope of the Elburz Mountains, and from the town the great white cone of Damavand can be clearly seen towering high above the rest of the range. There is little of real interest in the town. One of the Shahs surrounded it with a dry moat and a wide earthen rampart twelve miles in circumference. This is pierced by nine gateways—flimsy buildings of brick veneered with glazed tiles and ornamented by little turrets. From the outside the town shows a crowded mass of mud-walls and tree-tops with an occasional red-painted iron roof. The older part of the city is like other Oriental towns—a maze of narrow lanes hemmed in by high mud-walls. Every now and then the road is arched over for a short distance to form a bazaar. The shops are merely recesses in the

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side-walls, and the goods are stored on shelves and in pigeon-holes or heaped on the ground. The big bazaar is a really fine building; whole streets are arched over till they look like the aisles of a great cathedral. The roadway here is a little wider and the shops rather larger, but most of them are built on the same primitive plan. The different trades keep more or less to their own quarters, the silk shops being in one quarter, the jewellers in another, and so forth. The Tehran bazaar is the best stocked in the country, for the population is larger and wealthier than that of the other towns; the carpets and antiques and jewels are certainly far better than those to be found elsewhere. Some of the streets are fairly quiet, but in others one forces one's way with difficulty through the crowd. Women wrapped in their hideous black veils, and further encumbered with bundles and babies, wander along in small groups chattering shrilly to one another, beggars and small boys whine and jostle, and porters force their way through the crowd with loud cries of "*Khabardar!*" Carriages are not allowed in these bazaars.

There is another great shopping centre—the Lalezar, the Bond Street of Tehran. This is a comparatively wide street in a more modern part of the city. Down one side of it jolts a dirty horse-tram, and there are real side-walks—pavements they cannot be called—and shops with large glass windows. There

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are a few large shops which sell European goods, but the majority seem to be second-hand dealers where one sees the discarded household gods of one's friends for sale—old saddles and harness, dilapidated furniture, clothes, carpets, curios, and a thousand and one strange odds and ends from their stock-in-trade. Nearly anything can be produced if one looks long enough, for the Persian dealer is a hopeful soul, and is ready to buy anything at a price in the hope of one day making a small profit on it. Even roller-skates have been seen here, although there is not a single rink in the country, and once in an out-of-the-way town an optimistic merchant was seen displaying an aeroplane propeller outside his shop.

Practically all the Europeans and many of the rich Persians live in this newer quarter. The streets are wide and planted with trees, but even here they are still bounded by the high mud-walls which shut out all view of the gardens which generally surround the houses. There is an air of dilapidation about the whole town; the streets are worn into holes and ruts, and are a sea of mud in winter and deep in dust in the summer. The houses are built either of sun-dried or kiln-baked bricks, and the better ones are plastered over and whitewashed; but as one coat of whitewash is often expected to last for years, they often look more shabby than their mud-coloured neighbours. Most of the foreign legations are situated

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in the Ala-ud-Dowleh, one of the largest of these avenues : at the end lies the British Legation in a large garden of its own. Seen through the archway of the gatehouse, the green garden, thickly planted with plane-trees, is a refreshing sight after the dust and glare of the streets. It is quite a little town in itself; the Minister and his staff all live within the walls, and with the chancery, vice-consulate, escort and servants' quarters, stables, and dispensary, there is not much room to spare.

The palace of the Shah lies in the older part of the town, and is an unimposing conglomeration of mud-buildings. He seldom lives here, preferring his palace of Farrahabad—an erection like a large pale blue wedding-cake, some miles out of the town. Permission is easily obtained to see over the Gulistan, the town palace, but it is a disappointing sight. There are various tree-planted courtyards, on to which the principal rooms look out. One of these is well worth seeing : the walls and ceiling are entirely covered with small fragments of mirrors set in patterns; by night this form of decoration is extremely effective, for the whole room glitters like a mass of crystal in the lamp-light, but by day it looks tawdry. The two most interesting objects in the whole palace are the thrones. One is said by the Persians to be the peacock throne of the Mughul Emperors, brought from Delhi by Nadir Shah after the fall of that city; but this can

TRANSLATION OF HIRAN.



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hardly be, as it does not agree with the descriptions of that famous throne. It is rather like a low table surrounded by a parapet. The occupant sat upon it cross-legged. It is covered with plates of gold enamelled in colours, and at the corners are knobs set with pale-coloured rubies and emeralds. The rest of the room in which it stands is taken up by a miscellaneous collection of objects, many of them brought back by Nasir-ud-din Shah from his European travels: Mechanical singing-birds, globes, clocks, and clockwork toys are mixed up with a few pieces of beautiful Sèvres china, but the most interesting and valuable things—Persian silver-work, painted papier mâché, and other specimens of native art—are hidden away in cupboards on the dark side of the room. In another room is a small collection of modern European paintings. In all the rooms through which one is led there does not seem to be one really good carpet; they are all inferior modern ones whose aniline dyes are rapidly fading in the bright light.

Although the Shah does not live here, he comes in for the great *Nau Ruz*, or New Year festival, which takes place on March 21st. He first receives the members of the Diplomatic Corps in the big looking-glass room. In the meantime the Persian officials and a few spectators have assembled in one of the big courtyards, the Persians either in uniform or Court

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dress, which consists of a long garment like a dressing-gown made out of Kashmir or Kirman shawl. Detachments of various bodies of troops and police stand at one end of the court; at the other is a kind of deep verandah, in which stands the marble throne—a curious affair, built on the same plan as the peacock throne, but very much larger and supported by stiffly carved human figures. When the Shah enters, the band strikes up and he mounts the throne, the Princes of the Imperial House being already ranged on either side and the officials below the verandah. A few speeches are made, a poem recited, and the bands play again while the cannon in the square outside fire a salute. When it is over His Majesty retires to a room overlooking another courtyard, through which picked bodies of his troops file past. Persia has at various times attempted to reform her army and bring it up to date, and for this purpose she used to borrow officers from the European Powers. The remnants of the regiments they trained come first in their obsolete uniforms, some solemnly goose-stepping; the police and gendarmes follow, and last of all part of the Persian Cossack Brigade—very gorgeous in their long scarlet coats and white fur hats, the officers with silver daggers, sword-hilts, and cartridge-cases.

In summer all who can afford it, both Persians and Europeans, leave the stuffy, dusty town and settle

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down for four or five months in the villages and gardens which lie tucked away in the valleys of Tochal, the nearest mountain of the Elburz range. The village streets are even narrower and rougher than those in the town. The shops are small, and there is not much variety in their wares, which consist chiefly of grain and charcoal, oil, candles, and other necessities. There are masses of vegetables and fruit: purple-black aubergines, cucumbers, marrows and beans, apricots and plums, cherries and melons. The bakers' shops are interesting, for the baking is all done in public. The oven is large and made of mud with a domed top, and a wood fire burns inside. When it is thoroughly hot the kneader hands the balls of dough to another man, who flattens them out and claps them to the top of the oven inside. In a few minutes they are done, removed with a hook, and exposed for sale. There are many excellent kinds of bread, all made from brown wheat-flour and leavened. Some are crisp and almost as thin as paper. Others are thicker, and either plain or sweetened or sprinkled with poppy-seeds.

Above the villages the great mass of Tochal rises to a height of over 12,000 feet. A climb to the top is well worth while, for to the north the mountains fall away steeply, range below range, to where the Caspian Sea lies hidden by a heavy layer of clouds. To the east stands Damavand, looking more impos-

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ing than ever, and to the north-west rises another snow-topped giant. To the south Tehran and its environs lie spread out like a map, and beyond it the plain stretches away, half hidden by a haze of dust and crossed by low ranges of jagged hills.

CHAPTER VII

TRAVELLING

A JOURNEY in Persia is an undertaking requiring a good deal of preparation and some courage, for there are no taxis, trains, nor porters, no comfortable hotels nor Cook's agents. Fifty years ago, or even less, the usual way to travel was by mule caravan; but even Persia, backward as she is, has become infected with the desire for hurry, and some time ago a system of post-horses and carriages was introduced, and now motor-cars are common on many of the roads, and in time there will no doubt be railways.

In some parts of the country it is still only possible to travel by caravan, owing to the badness of the roads. As there are no hotels, everything has to be taken—camp furniture, beds, bedding, cooking-pots, carpets, and sometimes even tents. Each mule is furnished with a high-peaked pack-saddle, on either side of which is slung a box or bundle, and if these are not too heavy, another is perched on the top. The harness is decorated with cowrie-shells and bright blue beads to avert the evil eye, of which the Persians are very much afraid, and a copper bell hangs from each animal's neck. The procession is headed by an

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old pony loaded like the rest, but in virtue of his position as leader he wears more cowrie-shells, more blue beads, and besides his large bell he is festooned with strings of small ones, and with bright-coloured tassels. The muleteers are weather-beaten men in faded and much patched garments, over which in winter they wear coats of brown felt or of sheepskin with the fur inside and the skin dyed yellow and roughly embroidered in yellow silk. These men walk most of the way, but occasionally clamber on to the more lightly loaded mules. One usually rides one's own pony, but children and those who do not care to ride travel in *kajavahs*, or wooden panniers. It is a slow and tiring way of travelling, and is seldom used now except on some of the rough roads passing through mountainous country, where the track is too narrow to allow the passage of any wheeled vehicle.

Caravanning may be uncomfortable, but for pure discomfort there are few things to beat the ordinary post-carriage. It is probably either a broken-down victoria or a sort of four-wheeled cab whose top and even windows are made entirely of wood; the stuffing of the seats is worn into hard lumps, and the whole thing rattles and creaks as it bumps along over the apology for a road. It is drawn by four lean and scraggy horses who are harnessed abreast, by far the greater part of the work falling to those in the centre. The harness consists largely of string, and is decorated

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with blue beads like that of the mules, and they often wear collars of small bells. Each team does some fourteen to twenty miles, when another post-house is reached and they are changed; but if, as is often the case, there are no fresh animals in the stable, a wait of an hour or so has to be endured while the tired beasts are fed and given a short rest. The waggons carrying the post have always the first claim on all fresh horses, and one may even be stopped on the road and forced to exchange one's fresh team for the tired one from the post-waggon.

In the morning an early start is usually made, so as to allow time for a short rest at midday, when the sun is at its hottest; and if one has a long day ahead, one has often to rise at dawn, for the bedding and breakfast things have all to be packed up and stowed away in or behind the carriage, and the sleepy grooms and driver have to be roused and made to put in the horses.

The most barren landscape is beautiful at this hour. As the light grows the distant mountains appear, grey shadows rising out of the silver mist which veils the desert. Their colour gradually changes till suddenly the sun's rays strike them, and they glow pink and gold; but the colour soon fades, leaving them a hot yellow with sharply defined shadows, and every stone and thorn-bush in the desert shows up in all its natural hardness.

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The reluctant driver has now been made to see reason; he climbs up on to the box, where he is joined by one's servant, and a start is made. The road leaves the cluster of houses round the post-house and stretches away into the desert. As the day advances the coolness of the early morning vanishes and the plain seems to vibrate in the glaring heat. Now and then a dust-devil, or swirling pillar of dust, moves across the distance, breaks and disappears; sometimes a mirage is formed, and the distant hills appear to be separated from the plain at their feet by a wide lake. The monotony of the journey makes it seem unending. The sun beats down and heats the carriage, and a cloud of buzzing flies accompany it, moving with it or settling in swarms on the driver's back. There is little of interest in the scenery now. The mountains look as if they were cut out of cardboard, so sharp are their edges, and the road stretches away over the stony desert, each rise as it is surmounted revealing another expanse as dreary as the last.

At long intervals appear little villages—a cluster of mud-houses, a few trees, and some fields of grain and lucerne. The road near these becomes worse than ever, for the peasant thinks nothing of cutting a deep ditch across it to carry water to the fields on the other side. They look half deserted, as most of the inhabitants are either at work in the fields or asleep in some patch of shade. From time to time

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one passes a mule or donkey caravan, or one or two pedestrians tramping steadily along, each man carrying his few possessions tied in a small bundle. They cover twenty to thirty miles a day, and at night lie down on the hard mud-floor in some small caravan-sarai or ruined house. Their food consists of a few flat leaves of brown bread and a scrap of cheese or some fruit, and if they cannot afford a few coppers for tea they drink water from the nearest ditch. The camel caravans travel mostly by night, and during the day one sees the animals freed for the time being from their loads, wandering about the plain and grazing on the scrubby, dried-up little desert plants. Near by are the camel-drivers resting by the loads. Camels carry a much heavier load than mules, and the men often stand two of the big bales on end close together, throw a piece of sacking across them, and so form a sort of tent, under which they creep for shelter from the sun. The camels when loaded are fastened together, each one's head-rope being tied to the one ahead. Their big copper bells have a very deep note, which can be heard a long way off, and five or six graduated in size are sometimes hung one inside the other, each acting as clapper to the one outside it.

Sometimes one has to cross a low range of hills, and the road rises gradually, passing an occasional village tucked away in a fold of the hills. They are prettier than the villages in the plains, for as a rule

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there is more water. The neighbouring hillsides are terraced to form small fields, and lines of poplars grow beside the streams. The carriage crawls gradually uphill, and for one's own comfort, as well as for the horses', one gets out and walks for a while. At the top of the hill the driver cracks his whip, and, lashing up the horses, rattles gaily down the opposite slope regardless of the horses' knees or the passengers' comfort, the carriage bounding from stone to stone, two of the wheels as often as not up a bank, and the whole thing creaking and groaning as if its last hour had come.

At last one reaches a small village or caravanserai where the horses are to be changed. As likely as not there are no fresh ones, and one has to wait while the old ones are fed. The feed consists of a large quantity of chopped straw and a small quantity of barley. It is thrown into a square of sacking suspended by its four corners, out of which the four animals eat at the same time.

The Persians have a curious legend about this chopped straw, or *kah* as they call it, which forms a large part of their horses' food. Once upon a time Rustam, their great hero, was galloping along, and tied to his saddle he carried a bag of this chopped straw with which to feed Rakhsh, his horse, but the bag came undone and the straw gradually fell out. Rakhsh was galloping so fast that the wind made by

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his hoofs whirled the straw right up into the sky, where it was changed to the long line of twinkling stars which the Persians call the *Kah Kashan*, or Trail of Chopped Straw, and we the Milky Way.

If it is near midday one takes the opportunity of lunching, and if there is no clean room in the post-house where one may eat in peace away from the crowd of curious villagers, one can often gain admittance to some private garden, where, under the shade of a mulberry-tree or a little close-set elm, a carpet is spread for one to sit upon. The gardener brings an offering of cucumbers or apricots or some other fruit, and for a short while one rests in peace and comparative coolness. The people in the out-of-the-way places are seldom rude, but they are very inquisitive, and a travelling *farangi* or European is quite an event. They have strange ideas about us, and one seems to be that we are all doctors, and one is often requested to cure fever, blindness, sore eyes, and other ailments.

When the hour's rest is over one takes one's seat again upon the hard knobby cushions and tries to redistribute the baggage so that it does not all fall upon one at once when the carriage jolts over a stone. If there are no serious mishaps three stages are covered in a day, or even four if one is pressed for time, but the fourth is always a weary business and seems longer than all the others put together. As the sun

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sinks the air gets cooler and the sunset light turns the hills from grey to flame colour. But the colour fades rapidly, and in the east a band of blue shadow seems to rise from the earth and climb slowly up the sky. Presently a group of buildings looms up through the dusk—the end of the stage; and one sets to work to find a night's lodging. The post-houses are usually small and dirty, with one or two tiny rooms for the use of travellers, though sometimes part of one of the old caravanserais is used. These are fine buildings and in the distance look rather like forts, being built in the form of a great square and having no windows in the outer walls. One side is pierced by a big archway, the only entrance, which leads into a large square courtyard. In the middle of this is a platform of brick, on which Persians often sleep during the hot weather, and round which they tether their beasts. The rooms are ranged round this court and all open on to it; as a rule they have no windows, and the door is simply an archway. There are no windows in the back walls, for the stables lie immediately behind, the entrances to them being at the four corners of the courtyard, and they have no other means of ventilation excepting for some small holes in the roof. Nothing is provided but the bare room, and the traveller has to supply his own bed, carpet, and cooking-pots, and the servant, after a long and tiring day, has to set to work to be cook, waiter, and

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housemaid. The caravanserais are very noisy, and the caravans generally start off very early in the morning. There is a great stamping and jingling of bells, and all the muleteers start talking at once, and from the way they yell and shout at one another and at the animals they are loading, they all seem to be furiously angry. Sleep becomes impossible, and one is not sorry to get up and start one's own packing. The washing-water is ice-cold and probably muddy, but presently the servant produces breakfast—strong tea without milk, brown bread, fried eggs, and a tin of sardines.

If there is no room in the post-house, or if it is too dirty, a night's lodging can be found in some private house, the owner obligingly turning out for a few *krans*; but it is better to sleep in the post-house, as it is no easy matter to get the horses harnessed in the morning even when one is on the spot.

Travelling in winter is even worse than in the summer. The cold winds cut and skin one's face; the sun during the day is burning hot, the nights in the draughty rooms are a misery; and if there has been rain or snow, the roads are deep in mud, in which the carriage sticks hopelessly.

CHAPTER VIII

HALF OF THE WORLD

DURING the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Shah Abbas the Great was King of Persia, and under him she rose to a greater height of glory than she had ever reached since the Arab conquest. Not only did he increase her strength, but he did much to encourage the trade of the country; he was a great patron of the arts, and he enriched Isfahan, his capital, with many beautiful buildings. Sir John Chardin and other travellers, in their writings, give us very interesting accounts of the city's size and wealth, and of the splendours of the Court. The Persians had a saying, "*Isfahan nisfe jahan*" (Isfahan is half the world). Though this is an exaggeration, there is no doubt that she was one of the largest cities in the world, if not the largest. One realizes how the population has dwindled when one sees the large stretches of ruins and the corn-fields which lie within the town boundaries.

Of all the remains of the Safavi period the Maidan-i-Shah is, in spite of its decay, by far the most impressive. It is an immense square, or rather an oblong. It was once surrounded by trees and deep stone water-channels, but now most of the trees are

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dead and the channels dry, and the huge blocks of stone which lined them are falling inwards. At either end is a pair of carved stone goal-posts, used in the game of polo, which the Persians played centuries before we even heard of it. At one end is the Masjid-i-Shah, or Mosque of the Shah : a beautiful building, its gateway, courtyards, dome, and minarets covered with tiles mostly turquoise blue but mixed with other colours—dark blue, yellow, white, black and green—which form lovely and intricate flower patterns and inscriptions. On the east side is a smaller mosque of dull sandy colour, and at the north end is the dilapidated main entrance to the great bazaar. Within the last few years the heads of brigands have swung from one of its upper stories, but this is a practice which is rapidly going out of fashion. On the fourth side is the Ali Qapi : from one of its upper stories the Shabs used to watch the polo, the processions, and the wild-beast fights which used to take place in the square. Behind it lie the palace grounds, but only one of the buildings remains—the Chihil Situn, or Forty Pillars.

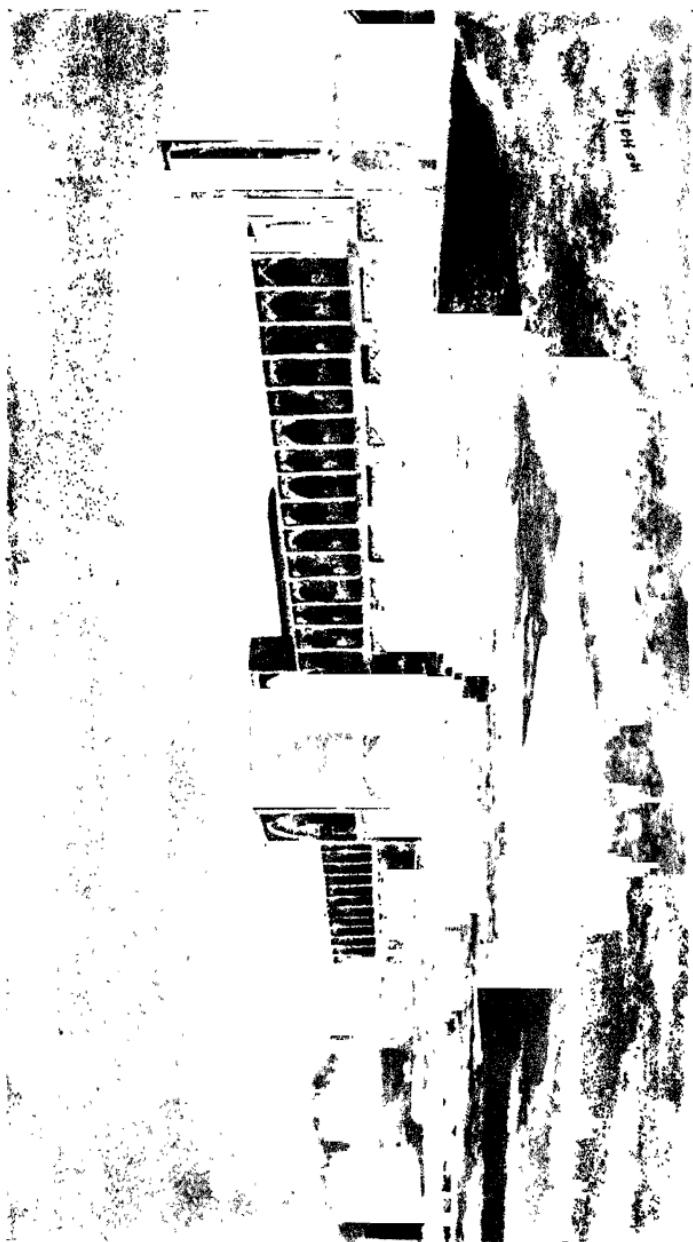
There are but twenty pillars, but they are reflected clearly in a long tank of still water, and their number is thus doubled. Behind the verandah, whose roof is supported by these pillars, is a large room whose walls are entirely covered with paintings which represent either battles or feasts. They are very dusty but

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interesting : the guests in their gorgeous brocades sit in rows on the floor, their feet tucked under them; between them stand dishes of fruit and slender-necked bottles of wine, while in front are dancing-girls in long brocade coats, their hair done in numbers of plaits falling almost to their feet. The palace gardens are now mere cornfields, and there is nothing more worth looking at.

The bazaars, however, are full of interest, and are among the finest in the country. They stretch for miles, twisting and turning through the heart of the city. The noise and crush are as bad as in Tehran; the loud-voiced haggling of buyers and sellers, and the shouts of donkey-boys and porters, become bewildering. Sometimes a long line of camels passes, tied nose to tail. They tramp along, their padded feet making no sound; their copper bells swinging from their necks—their heavy loads, which project on either side, filling up most of the narrow space. Shopping is a matter of hours in such surroundings. Having seen what one wants, one proceeds to haggle with the shopkeeper, who starts by asking about twice as much as he is willing to accept for the goods. As one argues a crowd of interested loafers gathers round. However low one beats him down, one may be sure that he has made a handsome profit, in spite of all his assurances that he has sold the article for exactly what it cost him; and as one moves on the

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idlers follow, hoping for further entertainment. The beggars are very persistent and follow one faithfully, but it is better not to give, for if one does the good news is passed on, and for every beggar satisfied three or four more start whining.

The bazaars are dark, but now and then through a high arched doorway one sees the brilliant glare of the sun shining into the courtyard of a mosque or caravanserai. The mosques one is not allowed to enter: one can only catch a glimpse of dusty blue-tiled walls and a brick pavement, but one may step into the caravanserais and look round. Those in the towns are often better finished than those on the highroads; the little rooms have wooden doors and windows, and there is a stone-lined tank in the centre, but they are all built on the same plan. It is quite peaceful in here after the din outside, and some of the shopkeepers retail their wares here instead of in the bazaar. They squat amongst their bolts of calico or piles of silk, playing with their rosaries, drinking tea, or gossiping, while they wait for customers.

Turning back into the bazaar, one wanders on through the cool half-darkness. In one place is a restaurant with a tiled fireplace across the front. The cook is busy grilling *kababs*—small lumps of meat—on wooden skewers over one of the little charcoal fires, while a bowl of stew and a tray piled high with cooked rice steam away beside him. A smell of

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rancid mutton fat pervades the air, and one feels no temptation to taste his wares. A little farther on is a greengrocer. The stock has overflowed his little shop, and melons and cucumbers are piled in the street. In what appears to be a dark cavern opening out at the back of one of the shops, one or two lightly clad men are busy stirring *gaz* as it boils in a huge cauldron. This is the sap of the tamarisk, and when cooked and mixed with almonds and pistachios it is very like nougat, and is quite one of the best of Persian sweets. Passing through a low door one climbs a steep flight of stairs, and in a cobwebby upper room finds an old man printing cotton curtains. His dies are carved blocks of wood, dark with age and use; he dips one in the dye and presses it down on the strip of cotton, repeating the action again and again. He uses no measure and never hesitates, and the regularity with which the pattern is printed is astonishing. When one colour has been applied the curtains are taken down to the river-bed and soaked; when they are dry again another colour is printed, and the process is repeated till the design is complete. Isfahan is celebrated for these fabrics, which not only make excellent curtains, but also tablecloths and cushion-covers, and are used by the peasants for making their coats. Here, as elsewhere, many of the trades keep to their own quarters. The dyers' bazaar, half ruined and almost empty, is decorated with yards of dripping

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cloth, mostly dark blue in colour. The goldsmiths' and silversmiths' bazaar is also fairly quiet. The jewellery is displayed in small glass-topped boxes, and consists mostly of gold filigree necklaces, earrings, and bracelets, many of the pieces being decorated with turquoises or rough pearls. There are rings set with precious stones, chased silver-work, and strings of coral and amber.

Leading out of one side of the Maidan-i-Shah is the noisiest of all the bazaars—the coppersmiths'. On either side is the usual row of little shops, in each of which sit one or two men hammering or filing their pots and trays. The noise is deafening, and one has to shout at the top of one's voice to make oneself heard. Fortunately it is short.

The Chahar Bagh is a wide road leading from the town to the river-bank. Almost deserted in the morning, in the afternoon and evening it is crowded, for it is the Isfahani's favourite place for taking the air. In the days of the Safavi Kings it was a magnificent avenue with gardens and palaces on either side. But one palace remains now; it rejoices in the high-sounding name of "the Eight Paradises." Near it is a beautiful little college. Its façade is tiled with blue, and the leaves of its huge door are covered with silver plates. The little court has a deep water-channel flowing down its centre, and is planted with plane-trees, lilacs, and irises. On one side is the

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mosque, covered inside and out with blue tiles. There seem to be no students now, but the open space in front of the big gate is generally full of groups of idlers gathered round a juggler or professional story-teller, who mouths out wonderful stories of *jinns* and *paris*, accompanied by much dramatic action. Sometimes there is a man with performing monkeys or a bear, or an auctioneer selling off second-hand goods, but the learned and studious are conspicuous by their absence.

The teashops do a roaring trade. Some of their customers perch themselves on the high wooden benches, others prefer to squat on the ground amongst the young trees which border either side of the road, with their tiny glasses of tea, drunk without milk but with an extra large quantity of sugar. One *qalian* serves for a large circle of friends, each man taking a few whiffs, then passing it on to his neighbour. The *qalian* is a waterpipe much like the hookah used in India. The water-jar is shaped like an ordinary carafe; out of one side comes a stiff stem through which the smoke is inhaled, while another rising out of the top widens into a bowl which contains the tobacco.

Walking down the Chahar Bagh one usually sees several Bakhtiaris, tribesmen from the hill-country to the west of the town. They are easily distinguished by their dress: their brimless white felt hats are worn

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at a rakish angle, their coats are half hidden by cartridge-belts, and their wide black cotton trousers contain enough stuff to make three or four ordinary skirts. Beggars abound; it is their happy hunting-ground. Some exhibit sores or deformities, some sit howling by the roadside, while others pursue the passing carriages. They seem to take life very cheerfully, and when business is slack may sometimes be seen playing cards in a deserted corner.

During summer the river shrinks away to a little trickle of water, which wanders through a wide gravelly bed, and the long and handsome brick bridges standing on their stone piers look quite out of place; but in the spring when the snow melts in the mountains, the whole river-bed is filled for a few days with a muddy rushing torrent which sometimes overflows the banks.

On the other side of the river lies the suburb of Julfa. When Shah Abbas conquered Armenia he saw that the people were clever and industrious workmen, so he carried several hundred families back to Persia with him, that they might help to beautify the capital. He gave them a tract of land beside the river, that they might build themselves a town, which they called Julfa, after their old home in Armenia. They were allowed many privileges, and amongst others that of being allowed to practise their religion in peace, for they are all Christians. They had at

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one time over twenty churches and a convent. Under later rulers they were sometimes persecuted and their churches pillaged, but much of the wealth remains. The cathedral, whose whole interior is painted and tiled, has a lovely silver altar and some very fine church plate, and on feast-days the services are a gorgeous sight.

In looks and dress the Armenian men are not unlike Persians, but most of the women go about in European dress with their faces uncovered. A few of the older ones wear black or white *chadars*, as the Persian woman's outdoor garment is called, but their faces are uncovered. Altogether they enjoy a good deal more freedom than their Muhammadan sisters. The children also are freer and seem more full of life. They all attend either their own Armenian schools or one kept by the English missionaries, and some speak three languages—Armenian, Persian, and English.

At weddings and other festivities the men and women are not entertained in separate rooms, as among the Persians. The old women who have retained their national costume look very fine on these occasions; their long full skirts and long coats are made of rich coloured silks and brocades, round their waists they wear heavy belts of carved silver, and on their heads head-dresses covered with silk scarves and with silver chains and coins hanging down on either side.

~~LIFE IN THE PERSIAN KUNTS~~

~~LIFE IN THE PERSIAN KUNTS~~

As in many other Muhammadan countries, the Persian women live in strict seclusion and never leave their houses unless closely veiled, and the only men who are permitted to see them are their near relations. Their outdoor dress consists of a long black garment called a *chadar*, which covers the head and falls to the feet, completely disguising the figure. The face is hidden, either by a long strip of white muslin with a square of drawn-thread work across the eyes, or by a shade of black horsehair, which hangs from the forehead like a sunblind; and sometimes a pair of baggy black trousers, drawn tightly in at the ankle and joined to a pair of stocking-feet, is worn as well. The women of the poorer classes have a certain amount of freedom, as they have to go out to do the shopping, and many of them have to work for their living, but the rich lead very restricted lives.

The Persians are allowed by their religious laws to have four wives, but many have only one, for a number of wives does not necessarily mean increased hap-

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piness, for the rivalries and jealousies of the different ladies lead to many quarrels, even if each one has her own separate quarters.

The houses are built in two parts: the outer, or *birun*, is given over to the men, while the women live in the inner part, or *anderun*, which is reached through a curtain-covered doorway in the dividing wall and a narrow twisting passage. It consists of a brick-paved courtyard in the middle of which are a few flower-beds and a tank, and at either end a row of rooms. For the sake of privacy there are no windows in the outer walls, but all open inwards on to the court. The house is only one story high, with a flat roof screened from the public by a high parapet, and the family often sleep up here in the hot weather, for the air is fresher than in the stuffy court below. Beneath the rooms is a basement used chiefly as store-rooms, but there is often a big room with a tank of water in the middle, in which they live in the summer when the rooms above get too hot. There is generally a large room in the centre of one row, in which the family pass most of the day. The floor is covered with carpets, and a few of the best are hung upon the walls, in which, about three feet above the ground, is scooped a row of shallow niches, where lamps, flower-vases, and various ornaments are kept. Round the walls is ranged a row of plush-covered chairs and sofas with little tables in front of them. There is far



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less furniture in a Persian house than in an English one. Instead of using wardrobes and chests of drawers, they keep their clothes in large chests, some of which are very gaudy, being covered with plush and tinfoil or with coloured leather. They do not often use bedsteads nor thick mattresses, but at night the bedding, which consists of wadded cotton quilts and hard round bolsters, is unrolled and spread on the floor, which also acts as a table at meal-times.

As almost everything is done upon the floor, and as there is so little furniture in a room, the floor-coverings are of great importance. For hundreds of years Persia has been famous for her carpets, which all over the world are valued above those of any other country for their beauty and durability. The old ones, many of which are to be seen in our museums, were all dyed with vegetable dyes prepared in the country, and although they were made hundreds of years ago their colours are still bright and fresh; but now the Persians have taken to using aniline dyes imported from Europe, as they are cheaper and quicker to use, but the colours produced are crude and glaring when new, and soon fade. Sometimes the carpets on the walls have pictures woven in them, two favourite subjects being the hundred most famous people in history and the Shahs of Persia. The Persians are very proud of these and consider them very beautiful; they are certainly very clever

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bits of weaving, but they would do far better to stick to their old conventional designs and flower patterns.

In these cramped surroundings the women spend nearly all their lives, though sometimes when there are no men about they are allowed to go into the *birum* and the garden, and in summer they go out to some country-house for a few months.

Many of the ladies have received very little education, and even if they can read do not look upon it as a pleasure but as a labour, though some are very clever and well-read. Their lives seem very monotonous to a European; they pass most of their time playing with their children, looking after their household affairs, or smoking. Their servants are constantly with them, and are treated more like friends than servants. The education of girls is, however, receiving more attention now than it used to, and many attend the schools opened by the missionaries, while others are sent to Europe for their education. They are married very young; the match is arranged by the parents or guardians, and the bridegroom does not see his bride till after the wedding. The affair causes great excitement in the families, and there is a good deal of bargaining over the dowry and the value of the presents.

There are two ceremonies, of which the first is a kind of formal betrothal, and if the bride is very young a considerable time elapses before the second,

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when she leaves her parents' house and goes to her husband's. The catering for the guests is a serious affair, for each one is accompanied by at least one servant, and all must be provided for. There are, of course, two feasts—one in the men's quarters and one in the women's. The cloths are spread on the floor, and on them all the dishes are placed at once. There are enormous round trays piled high with rice, some boiled plain, some coloured with saffron and mixed with almonds and raisins, or crimson with the juice of wild-cherries. A roast lamb is one of the principal dishes, and there are also bowls of thick soup, various stews of meat and vegetables, another of chicken, walnuts and pomegranate juice, minced meat and rice wrapped up in little packets in vine-leaves, and innumerable little dishes of cheese and mint, radishes, pickles, cucumbers, and other delicacies. There are various sherbets to drink, also *dugh*—a mixture of curdled milk, salt, and water, which is most refreshing and not nearly as bad as it sounds. At the old-fashioned feasts large flat pieces of bread were provided for each guest, and served both as plate and table-napkin. The servants who serve the guests remove their slippers and walk about the tablecloth amongst the dishes attending to their wants, and there is rarely an accident. Although the ladies lead such quiet, sedentary lives, they are possessed of healthy appetites, and the mountains of rice

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dwindle rapidly and the stews disappear equally quickly. When all have finished, water is brought to wash their hands, and the *qalians* are handed round, while the servants, after removing the remains of the meal, fall-to outside.

One of the great events of the year is the *Nau Ruz* festival, which comes in spring. It is a time of great rejoicing, and everyone celebrates it by wearing new clothes and paying visits to friends, while all the servants receive presents. The festivities last for thirteen days after *Nau Ruz* Day, and on the thirteenth all leave their houses and spend the day away from home. Rich men go to their country-houses, and the poorer classes either picnic in the open country or spend the day in tea-houses, and all drink quantities of tea and eat quantities of ices, however cold the weather may be. Near every town there is some spot, generally a cemetery, which is particularly favoured by the people, and it is well worth while to go out and see them enjoying themselves. The crowd is a cheerful, brightly coloured one—the little girls in their pink, blue, or orange frocks, the men and boys in smart new clothes of blue, grey, or brown, those who are descended from Muhammad wearing emerald green coats or sashes, while the women squatting on the ground in their black *chadars* look like large crows.

Before the *Nau Ruz* everyone has a bath; many

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have one once a week, but some cannot afford such a luxury often. A Persian bath is very much like a Turkish bath, and is a very long process. The rooms are heated to different temperatures, and the bathers are soaped and rubbed and massaged and rinsed by the attendants. When the actual bath is over the hair is dyed with henna, and the palms of the hands and finger-nails are also stained. The henna, which is applied in a greenish-yellow paste, leaves a bright reddish-brown tinge, but some darker stain is added for the hair which produces a raven black. Most of the rich possess their own private baths, but every town is full of public ones, which are easily recognized, for the crimson and blue bath-towels, knotted in long lines, are hung outside the doors to dry. Some of the private baths are very pretty, the rooms being lined with pale green marble and coloured tiles, the light being admitted through circles of thick glass let into the domed ceilings.

A visit to an *anderun* is very interesting, but the visitor must make up her mind to devote the whole afternoon to it, for a formal call of a quarter of an hour, such as is paid in England, is quite an impossibility; and one has to remain for two or three hours. The conversation has to be carried on in Persian, for very few of them speak either English or French, and is very flowery and full of compliments, and the manners of the ladies, like those of the men, are

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delightful. If their dress is interesting to us, so is ours to them, particularly our hats, for they never wear any. The national dress of the Persians is extremely ugly, but it is seldom worn now. It consisted of narrow black trousers, an absurd little skirt, or rather frill, about nine inches long, mounted on a broad band and worn well below the waist-line, and a straight coat fastening down the front and with long, narrow sleeves. The hair is crimped in front and hangs down the back in long thin plaits whose length is often added to by horsehair. Over the head is a big square of tarlatan with tinsel threads woven into it; it is folded cornerways and pinned under the chin. This veil is still worn, but instead of the coat, trousers, and skirt, they wear clothes made after the European fashion. They are usually made of brightly coloured satin or brocade, and one is often received by a gorgeous hostess in full evening-dress. Their faces are powdered and painted, and as eyebrows which meet in the middle are considered very beautiful, those who are not fortunate enough to possess them make up for the deficiency by a broad bluish-black stripe of paint. The servants, who remain in the room the whole time and often mix in the conversation, are dressed in printed cotton dresses and veils which fall to their feet.

Almost as soon as one arrives tea is brought, or sherbet. There are many varieties of the latter—

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honey and vinegar, quince and lemon, musk willow, wild-cherry, apple, and pomegranate being the commonest; they are none of them fizzy, and each glass has a large lump of ice bobbing about in it. On the tables are dishes of cakes, sweets, salted pistachio nuts, almonds, and salted melon-seeds. Some of the sweets are very good, especially the *gaz*, which is much like our nougat, almonds coated with burnt sugar, and a thin, crackly toffee made of honey and almonds. The marzipan and flat, crinkly sweets called elephant’s-ears are made with oil and flavoured with rose-water or cardamums, and are rather sickly. There is also plenty of fruit. When the conversation flags one is urged to try something more, and at last, when a round of the various dishes has been made and one is wondering when one will be able to be hungry again, ices are brought, and one has to nerve oneself for a fresh effort.

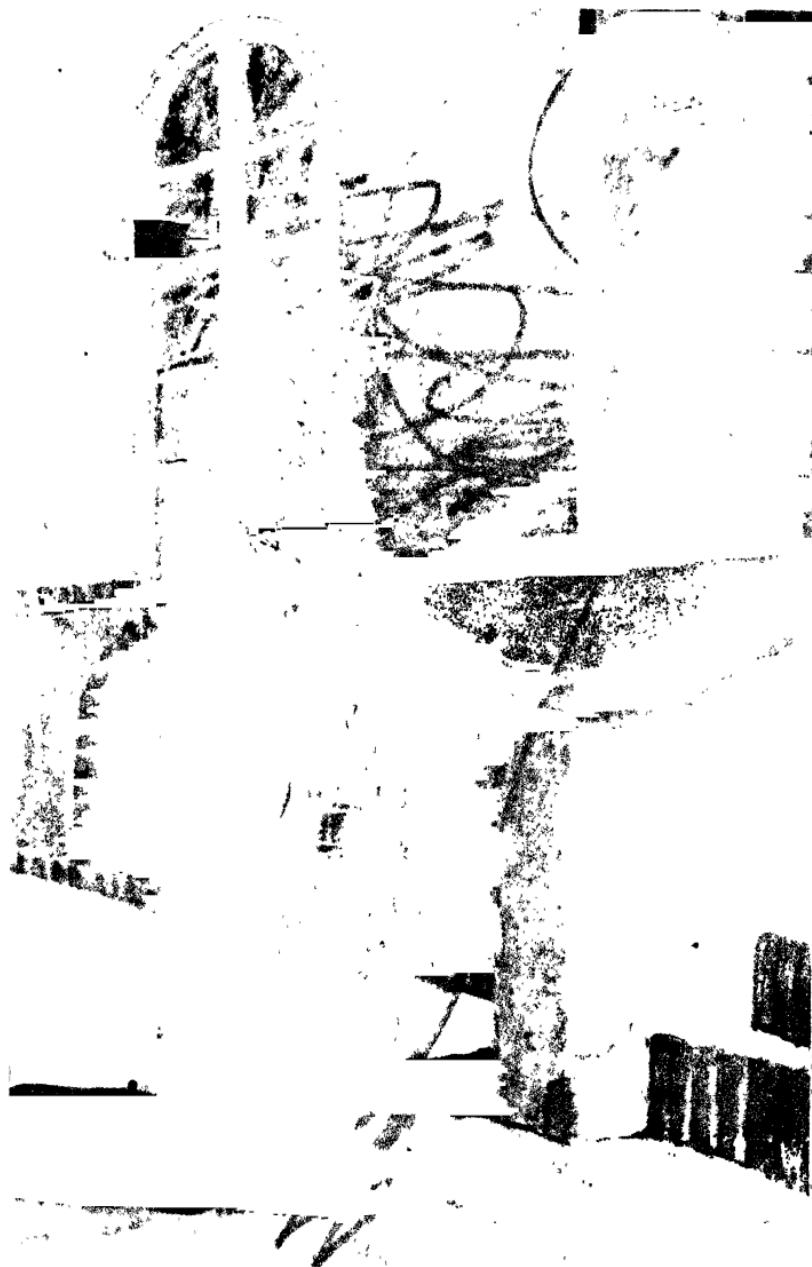
The children are pretty little dark-eyed things; the boys are dressed like grown men in long trousers, frock-coats with pleated skirts, and the usual brimless black hats, while the girls are dressed like their mothers, but often without the tarlatan veil. The small babies are wrapped round in swaddling-clothes till they are as stiff as little mummies; they wear little round caps of plush and tinsel, their eyes are blackened with kohl and their little hands are stained with henna. Small amulet cases made of silver, set with

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turquoises or sewn up in leather, are tied to their arms : inside are verses from the Qurân; and other charms, in the shape of cowrie-shells, blue beads, or dried sheep's-eyes, are sometimes worn, for the Persians are superstitious and very much afraid of the evil eye.

If the garden is clear of men one may be taken to see it before leaving. The beauties of the Persian gardens have been much overrated, and though their roses are not as beautiful as ours, still they are very lovely, especially the big single yellow and red ones, and the white climbing roses. The gardens are generally laid out in squares, with water-channels bordered with irises and roses beside the paths, and where these intersect in the centre of the garden is a stone-lined tank, with goldfish swimming in the clear water. The spaces between the paths are filled with fruit-trees, which cast a cool shade over the lucerne or grass which is planted beneath them.

At last one may take one's leave without any fear of being thought rude, and one bids the hostess and her family good-bye, with many bowings and murmurings of polite phrases.



A GABR LADY.

CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURE AND TRADE

IN spite of her great size and small population, Persia grows only enough grain for her own needs, for the greater part of the country is uncultivated, owing to the shortage of water. As no rain falls during the summer, all the crops must be irrigated regularly, so most of the villages are situated near some range of hills, and the water is brought down from these by means of underground channels called *kanats*, some of which are miles long and many feet below the surface. At intervals of a few hundred feet shafts are sunk so that the *kanats* may be cleaned out when necessary, and as the earth which is removed is thrown out round the tops of the shafts it forms heaps which in the distance look like miniature volcanoes. When the water comes to the surface near a village, it is carried by irrigation channels to the different fields and gardens, and each landowner has the right to so many hours of water per week. When the time is up the water is diverted from his fields into someone else's, and in order to waste none of

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the precious liquid the watering has often to be done at night by the light of lanterns. Wheat and barley are the most important crops, but cotton, lucerne, opium, potatoes, and most of the vegetables familiar to us, are grown. There is a great variety of fruit: apricots, peaches, figs, plums, apples, pears and pomegranates, quinces, and several kinds of melon; oranges and dates are grown in the warmest parts of the country, and in the gardens of the Europeans strawberries, raspberries, and currants all do well. Grapes there are, too, of all kinds, and a great deal of wine is made, and a spirit called arrack is distilled, for though all alcoholic drinks are forbidden in the Qurân, the Persians are much addicted to them. They also smoke a great deal of opium, although it is a very harmful drug, and the Government derives a good deal of revenue from the opium tax. It is, however, a very beautiful crop, for the white opium poppies fill whole fields, and with their bluish-green leaves make a pleasant contrast to the bright green of the young wheat. When the petals have fallen and the heads have swelled to a good size, each one is scratched with a small steel instrument, and a few days later the juice which has exuded and hardened is scraped off. As the work is very light it is done mostly by women.

The opium harvest is succeeded by the barley harvest, and a little later the wheat is also ready. When

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the grain has been reaped, it is piled in a corner of the field to be threshed, and a man seated on a small, heavy, wooden cart with two wheels is drawn round and round on the top of the heap by two oxen, breaking up the ears and stalks as he goes. When it is all sufficiently broken, it is winnowed by one or two men with large wooden forks, who toss it into the air, the wind blowing the chaff away while the heavier grain falls back on to the heap. It is altogether a very primitive proceeding, and the grain when gathered up is often full of pebbles and small lumps of mud. All their agricultural implements are equally primitive: the ploughs are small, and only scratch the surface of the earth; the rollers are made of blocks of stone; and the spades have wooden handles about six feet long, and are very heavy and cumbersome; wheelbarrows are unknown, and instead of using carts everything is carried by mules or donkeys.

The life of the Persian peasants is hard, and they have few pleasures or luxuries; they live chiefly upon brown wheat bread, to which they add cheese, curds, fruit, eggs, or vegetables. Their clothes are made of cotton, usually of a bright blue shade. The men wear short wide trousers of blue or black, and their coats, generally blue, but sometimes of printed cotton, reach about half-way to their knees; the sleeves are open from the elbow and show the white shirt beneath, and they wear wide sashes of striped cotton

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wound several times round their waists. The costume is completed by a brimless felt hat shaped like an inverted saucepan, and a pair of shoes, the uppers made of white cotton and the soles of blue cotton rags, and in the winter they add a large cloak of brown wool. The women, who are not so strictly veiled as their town sisters, for they have to help in the work of the fields, often wear *chadars* of checked material instead of black.

Many of the countryfolk belong to nomad tribes; they live in black tents, moving up into the mountains in summer in search of fresh pastures and descending to the plains again in the winter. They grow just enough grain for their own needs, but their wealth lies chiefly in their flocks of sheep and goats, and in their horses. Many of the most beautiful Persian rugs are woven by these nomads, each tribe having its own designs and colourings; they are woven by the women and children on horizontal looms, and if not quite as fine in texture as those woven in the towns their bold designs and rich colours render them most attractive. Many of these people are not real Persians, but of Arab, Turkish, or other Mongolian origin; and often a tribe is found far from its original haunts, for the old Shabs were in the habit of pacifying rebellious provinces by importing from distant parts large numbers of tribesmen on whose loyalty they could depend. They all

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have their own distinctive dresses : the Turkomans from Khurasan wear long striped red coats and huge fluffy white fur hats; the Khurds in the west wind twisted silk handkerchiefs round their high black felt ones; the Kashgais from Fars wear very low black ones, and all like to walk about armed to the teeth. The women also have different styles of dress, and pay very little attention to the rule of veiling. The free open-air life they lead makes them strong and healthy, but they age very quickly, the women becoming wrinkled and old-looking at an early age.

They are a much finer lot physically than the towns-folk, who lead more sedentary lives, most of them spending their time sitting in shops or working in a crouching position at some craft.

Each town has its own particular manufactures, and most have some special weave of carpet. The patterns of these are generally more elaborate than those made by the tribes, the large spaces being filled in with rambling sprays of flowers, arabesques, or inscriptions. Unfortunately children are much employed in the weaving, for their little fingers become wonderfully quick and deft at knotting the coloured wools into the web of the carpet. The long hours of crouching in dark, ill-ventilated rooms stunt their growth, and some of them become almost deformed, while others contract tuberculosis or other diseases.

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The carpets are woven on upright looms, in front of which the weavers squat on a plank. A man calls out the pattern—so many knots of this colour, so many of that, so many of another. The knots are tied on the threads which pass lengthways down the carpets, and when a row has been completed another thread is passed across the breadth to keep them in place. Some of the bigger carpets take years to make.

Very beautiful silks and brocades are woven in some towns, especially Kashan, Yezd, and Kirman, while Shiraz is famous for its silver and brass, worked in deep relief, and for its inlaid articles of wood, ivory, and brass. Isfahan has several manufactures besides her printed cottons. Her silver and brass is also very handsome, though not so deeply cut as the Shiraz work, and many beautiful tiles are still made. Pottery is made in all the towns, and it is most interesting to watch the potter at his wheel shaping a heavy lump of clay into a graceful water-jar or vase, but all the artisans are interesting to watch; their tools are so few and so primitive, and they depend entirely on their manual skill for the excellent results they achieve.

The chief wealth of the country lies in her oil-fields. Those which are being worked at present are easy of access, as they are situated near her south-western frontier, but in every other branch of trade

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she is handicapped by her lack of transport facilities, for the slow and expensive methods now in use add greatly to the cost of all commodities, and until she is provided with railways most of her resources will remain undeveloped.

